

Packing firm destroys about 77,000 broilers

WILKESBORO, N.C. (AP)

— At least 77,000 broiler chickens have been destroyed by a packing company here after tests showed some of them had been contaminated by a chemical suspected of causing birth defects and liver damage in experiments on mice.

The chemical, polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB), was discovered in autopsies on chickens from flocks raised for Holly Farms Industries of Wilkesboro, according to Dr. Kenneth May, the company's director of research and quality assurance.

The tests were begun after the U.S. Department of Agriculture found fish meal used in chicken feed had been contaminated by PCB while being processed in Great Lakes mills in Wisconsin.

May said Holly Farms destroyed the 77,000 broilers after it found PCB contamination in several sample batches of 30 chickens that had been taken from each of several flocks. He said a flock consisted of "several thousands broilers on up."

With a contaminated chicken was found in a sample batch, he said, the entire flock was destroyed.

May said Holly Farms and the Agriculture Department ran duplicate checks on fat samples taken from 30-chicken batches of 8 million broilers.

He said Holly Farms discovered the PCB contamination during lab tests to find out why the hatchability of eggs had dropped.